



PRESS RELEASE

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Spanish Military Aircraft Incursion into Gibraltar Airspace

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar can confirm that at approximately 12:00pm this afternoon a Spanish military P3 Orion aircraft flew within the boundaries of British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. At its closest, the aircraft was 2 nautical miles off Gibraltar's eastern coastline.

The Spanish aircraft was being controlled by military controllers within the Seville ACC control centre. Civil controllers within Seville ACC relayed traffic information regarding the intentions of the aircraft to Gibraltar Air Traffic Control. However, the aircraft did not follow its expected flight profile (it initiated a small climb while outside of BGTW) and, as a consequence, Gibraltar ATC designated the aircraft as unknown traffic, which requires that the aircraft is separated from other traffic by either 5,000ft or 5 nautical miles.

A British Airways aircraft scheduled to depart from Gibraltar at 11:50am was therefore delayed and held for 8 minutes on the Runway until Gibraltar ATC were certain that the Spanish Military aircraft had left the area, assuring the required separation during the departure of the BA aircraft. The BA aircraft departed Gibraltar for London Heathrow at 12:15pm.

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo, said: 'It is no secret that Spain has been deliberately causing problems for Gibraltar at our border and through its incursions into British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. Today's incursion into Gibraltar's airspace, in the middle of a busy day when several civilian flights were scheduled to arrive and depart from the Gibraltar International Airport, takes the Spanish harassment of Gibraltar to new heights.

'It is completely unacceptable that the Spanish military have interfered with the movement of civilian aircraft in this dangerous manner. Gibraltar International Airport is an extremely busy base for civilian passengers who are significant contributors to the tourism economy of the campo area. Delays caused by the politically-motivated manoeuvres of the Spanish military are intolerable but thanks to the swift action of Gibraltar's Air Traffic Control, delays were the only consequence. Today's incident could have ended much worse.'